



## Little Science Experiment by 2Dglasses

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**Summary:** Jim Hopper comes to work to see a box sitting on his desk addressed from Hawkins Laboratory. Inside is a note from Doc Owens explaining that the video records from 'Subject 011' had been recovered during the clean-up after The Gate was closed. That night, Hopper takes the box full of tapes back to the cabin and settles in for a long and painful movie night.

## Little Science Experiment

January 3rd 1985

The Gate was closed. The Snow Ball went off without a hitch. It was a brand new year. A chance for a bit of respite after two years of chaos, pain, confusion and fear.

Jim Hopper had legally adopted Eleven, real name now officially Jane Hopper. Although she had asked to continue to be called El as she had grown attached to the less threatening version of her given numerical name. Jim had brought back to her the advice given by Doc Owens to remain hidden for a whole other year and the kid had taken it surprisingly okay. But she had one condition; she could see her friends at least once a week. Hopper was initially apprehensive, but if they played it safe, they could make it work. Hell, she deserved to see her friends. Every child did, but after seeing the trauma she put herself through to save the town for the second time, he couldn't say no to her.

The start to the year had been very slow for Jim down at the station. Anything would seem so in comparison to what went down only a few months previous. This week, in the small town of Hawkins, there was simply nothing going on.

Today Jim had woken up at 7a.m. Feeling no particular urgency, he took his time to get himself ready and prepare breakfast for Eleven. He had shown her some different lunch options and how to prepare each so that she could have some more independence and variation in her day to day. Nothing too difficult that could risk her hurting herself, but he figured she would enjoy the activity too.

He set down the plate of Eggos and joined the girl at the table. Eleven's scruffy hair was sticking up at odd angles and her over-sized sweater almost swallowed her whole. But she looked fresh-faced this morning.

"Sleep well, kiddo?"

The girl nodded and stabbed the top Eggo with her fork before sliding

it onto her own plate. Hopper reached forward and squirted a generous amount of syrup on it for her.

"Good. Look, it'll probably be another slow day so I'll see if I can get off early and pick up some pizza on the way home. How's that sound?"

The corner of El's mouth curled and her eyes warmly glistened.

"Sounds good."

The kid's infectious smile spread to Hopper's face as he licked some of the syrup off of his thumb.

"Alright, but ya gotta promise to study really hard while I'm gone, okay? I'll be checking questions 15-20 before you can even attempt to get your paws on the pizza box. Yeah?"

El cocked her head slightly to one side.

"Attempt?"

"Attempt. It means to try."

Eleven bit her bottom lip as she silently stored this new word in her Word of the Day file in her head. She looked back up at Jim and smiled while nodding. The chief returned the smile and stood up.

"Alright. Gotta go."

He reached down and kissed Eleven's head.

"Be good, kid."

He ruffled her hair and grabbed his coat from the hook by the door.

"I will... attempt to."

He glanced at the girl who hadn't even turned around, but still managed to fill his heart with warmth. He smiled at her one last time before opening the door and venturing out into the cold January morning air.

Hopper was greeted by Flo holding an apple as he walked through the door of the station. He had gotten used to the sweet gesture and had even gotten used to the sour taste of the healthy alternative to his usual doughnut in the mornings.

"Hey, Flo. Anything come in this morning?"

"Nada. Same all week, Hop."

"Great."

Jim spoke half sarcastically, half relieved. He was glad not to have to worry about demogorgons or giant shadow monsters, but he had also grown out of just sitting around and being bored. He made his way through the station, greeting Callahan and the others. He opened the door to his office, removed his hat and coat and threw them down on the chair before noticing something different about his desk. There was a box sitting there. He stepped closer and saw that it was covered in tape that read "CONFIDENTIAL".

Jim opened his door and shouted for his secretary.

"Flo! Did you take for a delivery today?"

Flo briskly made her way to him and peered in at the unusual box from above her glasses.

"That's funny. Box like that would've had to have been signed for."

"It wasn't you?"

The woman pushed her glasses back up the bridge of her nose and shook her head. Hopper nodded slightly after a moment.

"Alright, thanks. "

He stepped back into his office and locked the door behind him. He also closed the blinds over his door. When he took in the box again he was able to surmise where the delivery had come from.

"Hawkins Laboratory."

He read the bold print and pulled off the tape. He opened the cardboard and immediately saw a piece of paper. He unfolded it and read the neat handwriting.

"Hey, Pop.

I'm sure you're aware that Hawkins Lab is going through a bit of a 'clean up' at the moment. When I took over from Brenner I inherited the big mess he left behind before his untimely departure.

Everybody at the lab had a vague idea of what kind of program he was running, but you must understand that nobody was told anything and nobody was allowed to ask any questions.

After everything was said and done, we all just assumed the subjects were gone. That is until I saw your girl. Eleven, she's something else, Jim.

A few weeks later I was made aware of the database that had been recovered from the floor that Brenner was running. The floor that was off limits to about 90% of the staff at the lab.

In the box in front of you is all of the footage taken of 'Subject 011'. I made sure it was all erased from the system at the lab.

I know you've spent a year with her already, but Jim, after seeing what's on those tapes I'd be surprised if she wasn't waking up screaming every night. I know it's too late, but maybe this footage will help you understand what she's been going through. Especially since we're asking her to stay hidden for another year

It's tough viewing, Jim. I could barely make it through the first tape. Just know you can call me if you need to. I really hope she's doing okay.

Your pal,

Doc Owens"

Hopper was frozen. Had he read that correctly? After a moment he let out the breath he didn't even know he was holding and placed the note on his desk before opening the box once again and looking

inside. Sure enough, there they were. About twenty or so VHS tapes neatly packed inside. He reached down and took one out. He read the white label on the front.

"02/04/1981. Subject 011. Test 497. Failure. Doctor Martin Brenner. Property of Hawkins Laboratory."

The police chief stood there mouth agape as he still loosely gripped the cassette.

"Jesus..."

He felt his knees give and he fell back into the guest chair, not caring that he crushed his hat. His hand automatically went up to his furrowed brows as he let out a long and heavy sigh. He took another glance at the tape he was holding.

'011'

It made it seem like she wasn't even a person. And this particular tape was dated from four years ago. That meant that she was being experimented on from at least the age of ten. And by this stage, at least five hundred times.

'Your little science experiment.'

He remembered saying those words to Brenner. Clear as day. He knew his own attention as he said them, but that didn't change the fact that he had reduced that little girl who he had barely known and who was willing to risk her life to save a bunch of strangers, to nothing more than a cruel man's sick experiment. The girl who he now called his own daughter and who shared his last name. The girl who was at home waiting for him to bring pizza back for dinner.

He tossed the tape back into the box and rubbed his forehead.

"Aw, kid..."

And from that moment, he knew he wouldn't be getting anything done today.

The locks slid open after he managed to juggle the boxes he was

holding enough to carry out the secret knock. He stepped through and nudged the door closed with his hip. As he made his way to kitchen he could hear El's small voice coming from her room. Hopper had gotten the kid her own Supercom for Christmas so that she could keep in contact with Mike and The Party.

Just as he dropped the boxes on the table, his daughter appeared behind him with a smile. Jim guessed who she had been talking to.

"How's Mike?"

"Good."

She stepped forward, eyeing the pizza box.

"He said he got an A in his math test."

"Good for him."

Hopper commented as he took off his jacket, hat and belt. He spotted her about to reach for the greasy, thin box.

"Ah, ah."

He reached forward and lightly tapped her hand. She looked up at him and playfully narrowed her eyes.

"Did you do your homework?"

The girl wordlessly nodded.

"Questions fifteen to twenty."

Jim smiled.

"Good. I'll check it after dinner."

With that, he took the pizza over to the counter so that he could set it on a plate. Doing this revealed the larger box that it was resting on.

"Property of-"

Hopper immediately coughed, startling El, and spun around,



grabbing the box.

"It's just some paperwork I have to go through. Case files. Pain in the ass if ya ask me."

He honestly wasn't sure if El had been able to read the rest of the sentence and if she did she didn't let on because she just shrugged and sat at the table. Jim set the box down over by the couch and continued preparing the plates before joining his daughter for dinner.

After dinner, Jim checked the homework that he had left for Eleven, which was perfect, and watched television with her until he noticed her beginning to quietly yawn. He took her to bed and read to her before she fell asleep. He kissed her on the cheek, turned out the big light and walked quietly over to the kitchen. He took a cold beer from the fridge and sat down on the couch by the television. He let out a quiet sigh and took a long sip from the fizzy alcohol. After a moment he reached forward and slid the box towards himself. He reached in and sifted through them to find the tape that dated back the furthest.

The tape he held was dated from 1977. It was the earliest recorded footage of the little girl known as 011. Hopper felt a weight in his stomach form when he realized that El had been only six years old when they began experimenting on her.

He put the tape inside the VCR and held his finger over the play button, but he hesitated. He almost couldn't bring himself to press the button, but then he thought about all the times his little girl had woken up screaming in the middle of the night or the time the power went out and she had a panic attack. Eleven never spoke about her time in the lab with anyone. Jim wanted to be able to help her whenever she was reliving those memories and the possibility of what he was about to do being an invasion of her privacy was outweighed by his need to be there for her.

So he pressed play.

He made sure to keep the volume down so Eleven herself didn't wake up. The first few moments were static until a room became clear on the screen. There she was. Little six year old Eleven sat at a metal

table in a hospital gown. It wasn't a super clear image, but Hopper could recognize the girl. She was tiny, rail thin and with her familiar shaved hair. She just sat quietly until a voice made itself heard.

"Please tell me your name."

It took a moment.

"E-Eleven."

It sounded like a question. As if the name was just recently given to her and she was doing her best to remember it.

"Yes, that's right. Your name is Eleven."

The young girl very faintly smiled, pleased that her answer was correct.

"How old are you, Eleven?"

This one took slightly longer. She furrowed her brows and bit her bottom lip as she thought about it. There was just silence as she thought until she eventually looked up again.

"Six."

"Good. You are six years old."

Again, relief flooded through the girl as her answer was accepted.

"Now, who am I?"

Jim knew that voice all too well.

"You are Papa."

She immediately answered.

Brenner.

"That's right, Eleven. I'm your Papa."

The sound of a chair scraping against the ground became apparent

and the outline of a man entered from the bottom left side of the screen where El had been answering to. An arm was held out to the girl who was looking up at him.

"Come with me, Eleven. I have something for you."

The girl apprehensively took his hand and they both walked out of the frame. Hopper was getting a sinking feeling with every second that passed. The screen suddenly changed to a different room, not so different from the last. It had the same blindingly white walls and floor, but there was a man who looked not unlike a doctor sitting next to a long table. After a moment, Brenner emerged still holding hands with Eleven who was almost hiding behind him. When they reached the table Brenner reached down and took the girl from under her arms and lifted her up to sit on the metal table. He bent down to be at her level and spoke softly.

"Now, when we leave this room I have something really wonderful to show you, but for now I just need you to lie down on this table. Can you do that for me?"

"Why, Papa?"

"Eleven."

Was all Brenner said. His tone was lower and the girl, even at that age, could detect the threat in the man's voice. So she nodded silently.

"Okay. That's it. Just lie back there."

He lowered the girl slowly back so that she was lying against the cold, hard metal of the table. Hopper could notice even through the grainy footage that she her breathing was quite shallow. She was scared.

Brenner leaned down and placed a hand on each of her biceps, effectively holding her down.

"Close your eyes."

He spoke in almost a whisper. Eleven apprehensively did as she was

told and Brenner turned to the other man, giving him a nod. Without another moment the man took hold of the girl's left wrist and leaned forward, obscuring the view from the camera. But Hopper didn't need to see what was happening when he heard the familiar buzzing of the needle and saw Eleven jolt in Brenner's grip. She immediately cried out in pain.

"It'll be over soon, Eleven."

The child was inconsolable however as tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Papa! Hurts! Why? Papa!"

Suddenly the lights began the flicker, causing Brenner to look up, almost forgetting about the writhing girl in his grip. He glanced back down at Eleven and appeared to be smiling.

"Good, Eleven. It's almost over."

Hopper couldn't believe what he was seeing. Forcing a six year old to get a tattoo was completely sadistic. Why did she need to be marked like that? He had seen the ink on her wrist only a few times and wondered when exactly she had gotten it. He knew it was always going to be a bad situation, but he never let his mind conger up images quite like this.

"Okay, that should do it."

The man observed as the buzzing of the needle ceased, leaving only Eleven's sobs to fill the space. Brenner leaned over to inspect the ink before nodding at the man.

"Good."

With that, the man wrapped the girl's delicate wrist in film and Brenner lifted her up into his arms. She continued crying as he carried her out of the room. The view then changed to a room that resembled a bedroom. Or at least, a room with a bed in it. Jim recognized it as the room he saw when he had first visited the lab. Minus the picture the girl had drawn. Again everything was white and bare. Brenner placed the child down on the immaculate bed and sat on the edge.

Her sobs had died down a little, but she still whimpered.

"Shh. Shh, Eleven. It's over now."

He reached up to her tiny face and gently wiped away a tear with his knuckle. He then took her newly scarred wrist in his hand so that she could see what had been done to her.

"Look. It's your name. See?"

Her watery eyes looked down at the digits on her skin.

"E-Eleven..."

She shakily read.

"Yes. Eleven."

He smiled down at her. She slowly blinked back up at him and wearily pointed at the man's arm.

"Y-You?"

Brenner chuckled and pulled up his sleeve.

"No. You're special, Eleven."

Hopper was beginning to feel sick at how manipulative this man was being to this vulnerable, little girl.

"I told you I had something for you, right?"

Eleven only watched as Brenner reached under the bed and pulled out a stuffed animal. It was a lion. He held it out to the girl, who after a moment of inspection gently took it from his grip. She brought it close to her body and looked up at the man with an unreadable expression. Brenner took one more moment to smile down at the girl before he pet her head softly.

"Sleep. I'll be back later."

Was all he said before standing up and exiting the room, leaving Eleven alone and hurt in the darkness. Hopper could just about make

out vague whimpers before the tape ended.

"Jesus..."

Jim didn't know what to think after what he had just seen. His heart ached for the little girl that was just in the next room over. And this was only the first tape.

He looked at his watch. It was only 10p.m. He took another big gulp of his beer and ejected the VHS, reaching for the next one.

It was going to be a long night.

It was now 5:30a.m. Jim Hopper felt physically and emotionally drained. He had just finished his back to back viewing of every single tape. He had seen the first time Eleven crushed the Coca Cola can. He had seen her refusal to use her powers on the cat and the punishment that followed. He had seen how Brenner taught her to read and write. He had seen how he forced her to use her powers when she didn't want to. He had seen how the orderlies would sometimes do their best to be as rough with her as possible.

One occasion that made Hopper immediately go outside for a smoke was when El was thrown into the dark room a little too hard. Her head hit the ground and she was unconscious until they came in to get her eight hours later. Brenner was the one to find her, and after he reprimanded the orderlies, he cleaned Eleven up and put her right back to work.

He pushed her to her absolutely limit every time and he would punish her when she refused, but also when the experiments didn't have the results he wanted.

By the time the last tape had finished, Hopper could see how broken and feral Eleven had become, but also how her own moral compass had never wavered as evidenced by her refusing to kill an innocent cat and instead killing the abusive orderlies out of frustration and self defense. To tell the truth he was proud.

But at the end of the day he had essentially just watched this little girl grow up in isolation.

He still found it hard to believe that this same girl was about ten feet away from him sleeping soundly. He was silently thankful that she was indeed sleeping soundly. He instantly thought back to her nightmares and imagined any one of the experiments and how they could be replaying in her head each night when she closed her eyes.

And he was responsible for her almost ending up back in that place.

This was way too much. Hopper leaned forward with his head in his hands and felt his eyes welling up. He let out a shaky sigh and pinched the bridge of his nose as his eyes began to sting and the tears began to fall. The static from the television was the only thing illuminating the dark cabin.

Jim was so deep in thought that he didn't hear the creak of the door opening and small padding that made it's way closer to him. Only when he felt the presence next to him did he know that Eleven was right there.

She didn't say anything. She just observed the state that her dad was in before looking down at the pile of tapes that were decorating the wooden floor. She bent down and picked up one, holding it close to her face and narrowing her eyes so she could read the print.

Hopper took this moment to look up at the girl through misty eyes and see her own dark eyes widen and her mouth part as she read the VHS.

"I'm so sorry, kid."

The static of the television that she so often had used to transport herself was now shining against her soft face. Her features were unreadable, but Hopper could tell that the girl was feeling a lot of things at once.

"Me?"

"Yeah..."

Was all Jim could bring himself to say. El silently sat down and scanned the floor to fully take in the amount of tapes there were.

"You saw... everything?"

Her voice was small and fearful. Hopper needed to be careful. He was always open and honest with El and when he muttered things to himself, even when she didn't understand, he always felt comfortable with her to be completely himself. So he wiped the remaining tear from his face and sat forward.

"I saw everything."

He confirmed. The girl hugged her arms and shifted in the seat, causing Hopper to scoot a little closer.

"Hey, it's okay."

Eleven closed her eyes when she felt the familiar stinging sensation. The memories of that place flooded back through her mind and now she knew that her dad had seen them too.

"You s-shouldn't have watched. I... I was... stupid..."

Hopper could feel his heart crack, but also his bones heat up with rage.

"Kid, don't you dare blame yourself."

Eleven looked up when she heard the harshness of his tone. Her cloudy eyes searched his face. Hopper almost regretted sounding so angry, but it was how he felt and he wasn't going to hide it. He did, after all, have some difficulty controlling his emotions around the kid.

"Look..."

He shifted so that he was fully facing the telepathic child.

"You weren't stupid, kid. You had no control over anything. You were a- a child who was taken advantage of by a bunch of sadistic adults."

He wasn't sure if she understood his last sentence, but at this stage he just wanted to grab hold of her and to instantly absorb all of her negative feelings. But he restrained himself in seeing her current state



of discomfort.

What didn't stop was his rising level of frustration and desire to hunt down everyone from the lab who was responsible for raising Eleven the way she was.

"I saw them give you that tattoo."

He gestured to her wrist.

"I saw them hook you up to machines and force you to crush cans and- and make things float."

With each word the chief's resolve was crumbling and his daughter could see him unraveling in front of her.

"I saw them lock you away in that- that closet and cry yourself to sleep."

He wasn't even looking at her anymore. His eyes were lost down at the scattered bundle of tapes on the floor.

"I saw them beat you. I saw them starve you. I... Shit, you were... you were so small, kid..."

Eleven felt a fresh wave of tears fall down her cheeks, but she remained still, just apprehensively observing her dad through big, glassy eyes.

"What they did to you was..."

He trailed off as his hand found his aching forehead.

"They hurt me when I was bad."

The girl's voice softly spoke. It hit Hopper at that moment. Eleven had never spoken about what went on in that lab with anyone before, so nobody was able to tell her that how she grew up was inherently wrong. Sure, her time spent with Mike and her friends had begun to show her a new life, but what did she really think about the part of her life that she had already experienced?

Hopper lifted his head and looked directly into his daughter's sad, dark eyes.

"Kid, listen to me. Has Mike or Max or Joyce or any of your friends ever hurt you?"

She was a little confused.

"No..."

"Exactly. And do you know why?"

She thought for a moment.

"Because they're my friends."

"Right. And because that's the way it's supposed to be."

She blinked at him, causing him to rest a hand on her shoulder.

"El, hurting people is wrong. You know that."

"Y-Yes."

"So, why do you think it's okay that they hurt you?"

The girl looked down at her lap and twisted her fingers together.

"Same thing. Every day...Fa... Familiar."

She did her best to remember that word. Jim nodded to himself as she confirmed what he had begun to surmise.

"It's all you knew."

She nodded slowly.

"Then I was able to leave..."

"Yeah, you escaped, kid. You got out."

El continued, not looking up.

"When I left, I met a man. Benny. He was nice to me."

Hopper instantly felt a shiver run through his spine as he pictured his friend's cold, dead body. El had met him.

"The bad men killed him."

She spoke sadly, remembering how she held the cold ice cream on her lap as he washed the dishes moments before his death.

"Then I met Mike, Dustin and Lucas. They were nice to me too. So I wanted to... protect them."

In this moment she turned and looked up at the chief.

"Like you."

"What?"

"You protect, you feed and you teach."

She mirrored his words that he used during their big fight last year. He immediately felt guilt wash through him.

"Kid, look. I shouldn't have been so hard on you."

He thought back to the feelings that filled the cabin last year.

"I was frustrated and scared and that's why I put all those rules in place. I didn't want to make you feel like you were back in the lab and I didn't want to put you in danger again."

Eleven furrowed her brows in confusion.

"Again?"

He slowly looked down at her for a moment before he rubbed his rough palm along his brow. It was time to confess.

"El, do you remember the first time you spoke to Will?"

The girl thought back for a moment before nodding.

"Mhmm. At the school."

"That's right. And do you remember after me and Joyce left? Do you remember what happened?"

Eleven shifted her gaze down only slightly so that she was staring into Hopper's chest, as the images of the monster... and the man she grew to resent crept back into her memory.

"Yes..."

Her quiet voice was flat and her lack of tone said more than if she spoke a whole sentence.

"The bad men came, right? Brenner came for you."

He could feel the presence beside him instantly tense. Her intense gaze now moved slowly back up to look into his eyes.

"How did you know that?"

Hopper shifted in his seat. He could feel the sweat on his brow. For her size she could be extremely intimidating.

"Well, kid, I could just tell you that I'm the police chief and it's my job to know..."

Her expression was unchanged.

"But I can't lie to you. I can't hide this from you anymore."

El's brows raised a fraction. Jim let out a loaded sigh before continuing.

"After we left the school, Joyce and I, we uh, we went to the lab. Figured it was the only way to get to Will after you showed us where he was."

He leaned forward and rested an elbow on his knee.

"Kid, I need you to understand. There was no way the bad men were gonna let us just walk into The Upside Down."

The pieces were slowly beginning to form in El's complicated mind.

"So, I made a deal. With Brenner. Once I knew he'd leave Mike and the others out of it... I... I told him where you were. So that- So that we'd have a chance to save Will..."

Eleven was silent, but Jim saw how her brows loosened and her mouth opened slightly. He was almost certain he heard her let out an ever so quiet, shaky breath. He could feel a gradual build of pressure radiate from right in front of him. He backed up a few centimeters and reached out his palms so that they hovered close to the girl.

"El, please. I didn't see any other way. I... I thought you'd be able to..."

In hearing his own words he trailed off.

"Hell, I don't know what I thought..."

Suddenly, Eleven grabbed her head and curled in towards herself. Almost immediately the lighting in the room began flickering on and off. Jim reached forward and placed a palm on his kid's now scalding hot and saturated back.

"Kid, I'm so sorry. After watching what he did to you that whole time... If I had the chance again I- I'd never send you back to..."

He looked down at the scattered tapes, kicking one near his foot.

"To that... I'd find another way..."

When he looked back up at the girl her head was upright again and her fists rested on her own knees. Her eyes were shut tight and the intensity of the light flickering didn't waver. Jim was beginning to worry. Images of the windows smashing from their big fight came flooding into his head.

"El, I'm sorry."

Hopper then saw that familiar crimson drip from the girl's nose and silently braced himself for what could happen next.

Except nothing happened. The flickering stopped and instead, the darkness of the room from before was replaced with the warm glow from the lamps scattered around the cabin. The pressure faded until an ease replaced it and it was then that Hopper realized that El's nosebleed was caused by her trying to calm herself down and prevent another outburst, not from her becoming more angry.

She let out an even breath and slowly opened her eyes. Hopper went to reach for her, but stopped himself.

"El..."

After a moment she turned to him.

"Will is okay. I am okay."

Jim blinked at his daughter's words. He let a puff of air like he almost didn't believe it.

"Well yeah, but... kid, c'mon, you're not angry?"

"I am angry."

Her frankness made Hopper feel like running away.

"But I'm happy Will is here. And... I'm here... with you."

She spoke looking right into his eyes. Jim felt his heart swell. He smiled sadly down at his daughter.

"I'm sorry, kid. I'm sorry for everything you've been through in your life. And I'm sorry for ever treating you like any less of a person... because you're the strongest person I've ever known."

A tear fell down his face as his daughter gently smiled up at him. She could tell how much this secret had been haunting him all this time. She reached her arm over and took his hand. He immediately pulled her into a tight embrace.

"I love you, kid."

"I love you too."

He smiled and savored the feeling of her warm heartbeat against his chest.

"Dad."